

## Sunday Gospel Background

Children are sometimes fearful about standing out. They may need to be reminded that the gifts God gives each of us are intended to be used for the good of all. In this Sunday's Gospel, the master entrusts large sums of money to three servants. Two use the money to make more, and one gives into his fear and hides it. Here is an opportunity to explore and affirm your child's gifts and talents, and help your child discover ways to share these gifts with others.

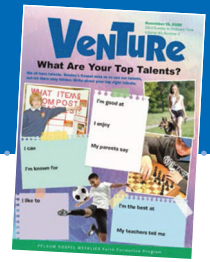
## Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- ☐ **Pray together** Share concerns you would like to pray for. After each one, respond together: "Loving God, hear our prayer." Then say the Our Father together.
- ☐ **Cover Activity • What Are Your Top Talents? (page 1)** Encourage your child to write responses. If your child has no idea where to begin, talk about recent activities and **ask**: how did you feel when you were doing that? Remind your child that even seemingly small talents are important.
- ☐ **Story • The Girl Who Always Tried (pages 2-3)** Read the narration parts of the story aloud and have your child read the speaking parts.
- ☐ **Turn to the Think questions on page 3.** *Answers: 1. Open-ended; Gina likes to participate, be part of things. She's looking for something at which she will excel and enjoy. 2. Gina has a positive outlook. When she doesn't make the team, she still cheers them on. When she doesn't get a part in the play, she joins the prop crew. She looks for the next opportunity to help and be part of something. 3. Gina seems confident and self-assured. She is a leader; she also faithfully attends Mass, so she will be reliable and familiar with the Order of Mass. 4. Give your child time to think about this question. Revisit your discussion from the cover activity if needed.*

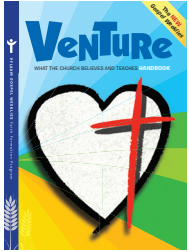
## Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • The Servant Who Did Not Use a Talent (page 4)** Explain that when this Gospel was written, people would have known a talent as a large sum of money equivalent to what workers might make in their entire lifetime. (A talent-weight is a measure of gold or silver.) Today, we understand talent to mean something we are good at. Both definitions apply to our understanding of this Gospel, which is about the necessity of a personal response to Jesus. The third servant is punished for not making an effort, for living in fear and choosing inaction out of fear of getting it wrong. Proclaim the Gospel together by dividing the parts of Narrator, Jesus, the three servants, and Master between you and your child. Invite other family members to take parts if they are available.
- ☐ **Discuss the Think questions on page 4.** *Answers: 1. The master gives talents based on what he knows about each servant; he gives them what he trusts they can handle. 2. The master is a hard man, and the third servant is afraid to take a risk with his money. The master is angry, takes the money back and gives it to the first servant; then he throws the third servant out of his household. 3. In the Parable of the Wedding Feast, the guest who was not wearing proper wedding clothing was cast out of the celebration into the darkness. Those who do not believe risk not being able to share in eternal life with God. 4. She is like the servants who take a risk and double their money. Gina could have stayed quiet, not risked trying out for a team or for the play, but she persisted until she found a place to contribute her talents.*



## □ Connecting Gospel and Doctrine • God Gives Everyone Talents (page 4)

Read aloud to further your child's understanding of talents. Then discuss the second set of *Think* questions.



- **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 51. Together, read the seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching. Ask which of these themes fits today's lesson. Gina in the story wants to be part of something—a softball team, drama group, church community. She represents our need to belong and to contribute. *Call to family, community, and participation.*

Going theme by theme, ask how your child might use God's gifts to support Catholic social teaching. Conclude by talking about people you know who act on Catholic social teaching at your school, parish, or neighborhood.

*Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Venture, page 5.*

- **Catholic Faith Word • Kingdom of God (page 5)** Have your child read aloud the definition at the bottom of page 5. Point out that this Sunday's Gospel is a parable about the Kingdom of God.

- **Our Catholic Faith • How Do We Prepare for Jesus' Return? (page 5)** The Book of Proverbs is a practical handbook compiled by members of the king's household that reflects the conventional wisdom of the time. Explain that people who show "fear of the Lord" show proper respect, awe, and reverence to God. People who fear God are not afraid; rather, they turn away from sin, avoiding anything that might lead to sin.

Have your child read the Proverbs passage and article silently, following the text directions. **Answers:** *Circle:* brings good fortune, fears God; *Box:* reaches out, gives help, fears God; *Underline:* spins thread, helps the poor and needy. Invite your child to complete the right column. Affirm your child's responses.

## Live the Gospel

- **Living the Gospel • Do You Have a Talent to Make Things Better? (pages 6-7)** Adjust the activity for home use by briefly reviewing each scenario and choosing one or two to talk about. Ask if your child can remember similar experiences and what happened. Conclude by pointing out that doing nothing in a situation is equivalent to burying your talent, the solution Jesus didn't think much of in this Sunday's Gospel.
- **Saints • Saint Roque González (page 8)** Read about Saint Roque González, whose feast the Church celebrates on November 16.
- **Concluding Prayer** Say: Lord God, I thank you for my amazing child [name]. Thank you for giving [name] some special talents and abilities, especially [name some of your child's talents and abilities]. Help [your child's name] praise you by sharing these talents with others in your name. Amen.



## Parent Resources

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## Sunday Gospel Background

This Sunday's Gospel can be a little scary. The goats wind up in eternal punishment, reminding us of the reality of Hell. But this Gospel, which builds on last Sunday's Gospel message, also reminds us of the need to be grateful for the gifts we've been given, and how we need to share them with those most in need. While visiting prisoners and hospitals may not be practical or possible, when we offer gifts of food, water, clothing, companionship or friendship, we are following the most important message of Jesus' life—love of neighbor.

## Share Experiences

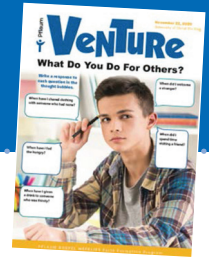
Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- ☐ **Pray together** "Loving God, thank you for \_\_\_\_." Finish the sentence and invite your child to do the same. Finish by praying: "Loving God, may we always keep thankful hearts and speak grateful words. Amen."
- ☐ **Cover Activity • What Do You Do for Others? (page 1)** Our Catholic Liturgical Year culminates with this Sunday's celebration of the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. The Gospel is about the Works of Mercy. Those to be judged at the end of time realize that whenever they encountered someone who was hungry, thirsty, homeless, and alone, they met Jesus. Have your child work on the questions in the thought bubbles. Offer help if needed to jog your child's memory about these experiences.
- ☐ **Article • Doing the Works of Mercy (pages 2-3)** Read the first two paragraphs aloud, then have your child finish reading the story silently. Ask your child to choose three activities that are most meaningful to talk about.
- ☐ **Discuss the Think questions on page 3.** *Answers: 1. Open-ended; they identified ways they could help as well as how they most enjoyed serving. Emphasize that everyone can help, regardless of age or ability. 2. It's more fun to do the works together, but it's also safer to go in groups and with a trusted adult. 3-4. Use these questions to think about and plan ways your family can safely serve others during the pandemic.*

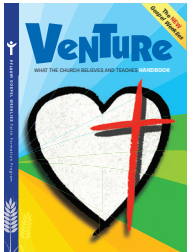
Read aloud the text in the light-blue box on page 3. Remind your child that Advent begins next week. Advent offers everyone opportunities to share with others.

## Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • Come! You Have My Father's Blessing (pages 4-5)** Explain that this Gospel reading is not exactly the one you will hear on Sunday. *VenTure* has added parts to create a choral reading. Take turns reading the parts of Narrator, Jesus 1-3, and Children 1-12. Then read the Chorus parts together.
- ☐ **Discuss the Think questions on page 5.** *Answers: 1. Open-ended. They are helping God's people, but they do not have Jesus' face. People who act with a sincere desire to help others don't look for reward. 2. Open-ended; they may have shared extra food or clothing, or shopped and prepared food. 3. Open-ended; teachers, coaches, other adult mentors and helpers may step in when needed. 4. Open-ended. Ideas: donating outgrown or unused clothing; contributing to or leading food drives at your school or parish. 5. Jesus is aware of everyone in his community—those who are in need, those who help others, and those who fail to help, whether they are unaware of others' needs or choose to ignore them. He is a fair and just leader.*



- **Connecting Gospel and Doctrine • Jesus Teaches Us How to Treat One Another (page 4)** This section summarizes the message of the Gospel. When we treat others with kindness and mercy, we show our love for God. If you love God, you love his people.
- **Discuss the second set of *Think* questions on page 4.** *Answers: 1. Open-ended. As followers of Jesus, we have no other choice but to care for each other. Remind your child that Jesus commands us to love one another out of our love for God the Father. 2. Brainstorm ideas together. Encourage your child to seek opportunities to show loving kindness this week.*



- **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 50. Find the list of Corporal Works of Mercy. Explain that these are acts of love for people who need food, shelter, water—things our bodies need to survive and thrive. These are the works we heard in the Sunday Gospel.

Move to the section on the Spiritual Works of Mercy and take turns reading each one aloud. Share examples of how people do spiritual Works of Mercy for each other. This list does not come directly from Jesus, but it has been taught by the Church for many years.

*Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to VenTure, page 5.*

- **Our Catholic Faith • When did we help you, Lord? (page 5)** Look at the photos and read the captions together to emphasize this Sunday's Gospel and related doctrine.
- **Catholic Faith Word • Parousia (page 5)** Read the definition aloud. Explain that we are nearing the end of the Liturgical Year in the Church; similarly, our Gospel readings discuss Jesus' coming again at the end of time.

## Live the Gospel

- **Living the Gospel • The Works of Mercy Game (pages 6-7)** This activity provides an opportunity to reflect on these practices in a game format. Your child can talk about them, remember them, and, with guidance, practice them. (Before playing the game with your family, make sure everyone is familiar with the Corporal Works of Mercy, as explained in *What the Church Believes and Teaches*.)

Read the directions aloud together. Have your child modify the game board by drawing specific ways to practice a Work of Mercy in the building shapes. Invite your child to look at the two photos on page 6. Read aloud the captions and decide which of the Works of Mercy they fulfill. *The Pope visits the imprisoned and cares for the poor; Ryan gives drink to the thirsty.*

- **Closing Prayer • Jesus Calls Us to Be Servant Leaders (page 8)** Read this feature about the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. Note that this Sunday's Scriptures compare Jesus to a shepherd. Ask your child to describe how a shepherd leads. *With confidence and kindness.* This is our model of servant leadership. Then share this prayer service together; be sure to let your child take the lead!



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## Sunday Gospel Background

The beginning of Advent is also the beginning of the Church's year, or the Liturgical Year. In the Gospel, Jesus tells of a man who leaves his servants in charge while he travels. Jesus reminds us to follow his way and do all we are called to do as we wait for him to come again. We might compare it to household chores or homework. If we leave things to the last minute, we might be caught off guard. Some people even make "spiritual New Year's resolutions," to follow Jesus' teachings more faithfully and not put them off.

## Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- ☐ **Pray together** (If you have an Advent wreath, light the first violet candle. If you don't have an Advent wreath, any candle will do.) "Loving God, you sent Jesus to live with us as our brother. We are getting ready to celebrate his birth among us at Christmas. Help us to live more like him by turning to you in prayer and by loving and caring for others. Amen."
- ☐ **Cover Activity • What Will Your Advent Be Like? (page 1)** You might want to play some Christmas carols as soft background music as your child quietly completes this meditative activity. Note that the activity doesn't ask your child to write a resolution, but suggests coloring the letters one by one.
- ☐ **Play-Drama • Show Us the Way Home (pages 2–4)** This play imagines the experiences of a family that was part of the Babylonian Exile. Turn to the map on page 5, and identify the Persian Gulf and the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Show your child where Babylon was, where Jerusalem is, and the kind of terrain that lay between them. Note: You may choose to read aloud this entire page as background to prepare for reading the play.

This play has several parts, so you may wish to simply take turns reading them, or assign additional family members, if available. Read through the play once or twice to familiarize your child with the parts; then act it out using the creative movements suggested and any props you want to add. Empty boxes could be the "wall," a sturdy candleholder can serve as the menorah, and stuffed or plastic animals can be the wild animals.

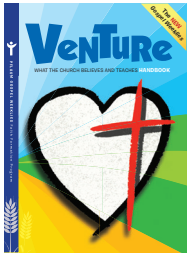
- ☐ **Discuss the *Think* questions at the top of page 4.** *Answers: 1. It is their homeland; they want descendants to know where they are from; they don't have a temple in Babylon. Simon and Leah have made a home in Babylon; they are happy there. 2. They like their Babylonian friends, toys, and culture. They know little about their homeland and ancestors in faith; they are becoming more like Babylonian children. 3. The Jewish faith won't survive unless the younger generations move back to Jerusalem, worship at the Temple, and learn the stories of their faith.*

## Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • Jesus Urges Us to Be Ready (page 4)** Share about a time you put something off and how you felt about it. Invite your child to share similar experiences. Explain that Jesus tells a story like this in Sunday's Gospel. Proclaim the Gospel by reading the parts of Narrator, Jesus, and Traveler together with your child.
- ☐ **Discuss the *Think* questions on page 4.** Use the questions to help your child recognize that Jesus wants us to be ready for his coming by living as he has shown us. *Answers: 1–2. Jesus is the traveler, who will return without warning, so we need to be ready at all times. 3. We can be ready by living our lives as Jesus did—caring for the least among us, doing the Works of Mercy, keeping God's commandments.*



- ☐ **Connecting Gospel and Doctrine • Advent Celebrates the Incarnation (page 4)** Read this summary of the mystery of the Incarnation. Discuss the *Think* questions that go with it. *Answers: 1. Open-ended. 2. Through prayer, by attending Mass regularly, by showing our gratitude to those who help us, by offering help to those who need us; open-ended.*



- ☐ **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 16. Begin by pointing out the various calendars and planners your family uses. Read aloud the paragraphs on page 16 together. Talk about the importance of Sunday worship. If your family has difficulties getting to church on Sunday, brainstorm ways to get around those challenges.

Turn to page 17. You can find the 2021 dates for feast days listed in the first column by going to [usccb.org/events](http://usccb.org/events). Invite your child to make note of these feasts on your family calendar.

*Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to VenTure, page 4.*

- ☐ **Catholic Faith Word • Advent (page 4)** Read the definition aloud to emphasize the significance of this Church season.
- ☐ **Our Catholic Faith • Isaiah Tells Us to Get Ready (page 5)** If you have not already read this, invite your child to read the page silently.

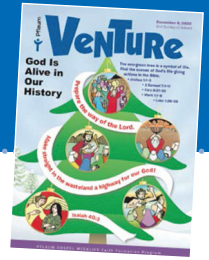
## Live the Gospel

- ☐ **Advent Calendar (page 7)** Give your child a moment to examine the illustration. Suggest that your child put the calendar someplace visible in your home so that everyone can do the activities each day. There is room for initials as a way of keeping track.
- ☐ **Saints • Saint Jane Frances de Chantal (page 8)** Read about Saint Jane, a woman who rose up to answer the needs of her time. Encourage your child to learn more about her. Her decision to leave her wealth behind to care for the poor and suffering is a good follow up to last week's Works of Mercy lesson.
- ☐ **Closing Prayer • Advent Prayer Service (page 6)** Many Catholic parishes make an effort to have the Sacrament of Reconciliation available for families during Advent. This prayer service can serve as a preparation. Divide the parts between you. As always, feel free to invite other family members to join the prayer. (Later on, read the quote from Saint Paul VI. Talk about what it means to you that Christ is with us in the Blessed Sacrament.)



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### Sunday Gospel Background

While locusts (grasshoppers) and wild honey may be an off-putting diet, the characters of Isaiah and John the Baptist in this Sunday's Gospel are of great interest to us. Both call us to prepare the way of the Lord. Both refer to the first coming of Jesus at his Nativity, but in this first part of Advent, we are reminded that Jesus will come again at the end of the world. We do not know when that will be, but we are called to be prepared. How? First, by repentance and conversion, or "turning around" the parts of our lives that don't reflect Jesus. Second, by living a life that is forgiving and loving toward others. That is how John and Isaiah told people to prepare for the Messiah, and how we, who live long after he came, prepare for his return.

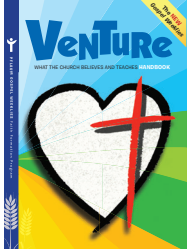
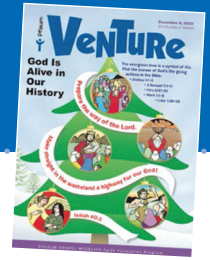
### Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- ☐ **Pray together** (Light the second candle on your Advent wreath, if you have one. If not, light a candle that is large enough to stay lit throughout the lesson.) "Loving God, you sent Jesus to be our brother here on Earth. He showed us how to build a community of love and forgiveness. Be with us today as we learn more about being his followers. Amen."
- ☐ **Cover Activity • God Is Alive in Our History (page 1)** Explain that this is a Jesse tree (named for Jesus' ancestor, Jesse, King David's father). The ornaments depict some of Jesus' ancestors. Ask if your child recognizes any of them. Moses can be identified by The Ten Commandments. Last week's play taught about Ezra leading the return from the Babylonian Exile. David's harp and crown identify him. Mary learns that God has chosen her to be the mother of his Son. Choose one of the Scripture passages to read. If you do not have a Bible at home, you can go to [uscbb.org](http://uscbb.org) and navigate to Bible. Talk about God's role in the reading, and how it is an example of God giving life to his people.
- ☐ **Story • The First Move (pages 2-3)** Read the story aloud together. Use the bold, colored type as a cue to switch readers.
- ☐ **Discuss the Think questions on page 3.** *Answers: 1–5. Open-ended. Use these questions to generate a discussion on how to forgive others, why it feels better to forgive than to hold a grudge, and why making the first move is worth the risk.*

### Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • John the Baptist Prepares Jesus' Way (page 4)** Divide up the parts of Mark, Isaiah, Narrator, John, and the three Listeners to proclaim the Gospel.
- ☐ **Discuss the Think questions on page 4.** *Answers: 1. Both John and Isaiah trust God will send a savior. 2. John wants people to turn away from their sins, whatever they are doing that keeps them from listening to God in their lives, and be baptized as a sign they are willing to be new people. 3. John believes God is sending the Messiah, who will bring the Holy Spirit to Israel. 4. After Tom learns that his dad has forgiven his friend, he reaches out to T.J. Tom realizes how hard it could be for T.J. to contact him after their big fight. 5. Open-ended. Forgiving is opening our heart to a relationship with someone who has hurt us. Forgiving others opens us to close relationship with God, too.*
- ☐ **Connecting Gospel and Doctrine • We Make Straight Our Path to God (page 4)** Read aloud this summary of the doctrine. **Ask:** How do we make things right when we sin? Perhaps even more important, how do we stop making the poor choices that lead us to sin? Discuss the doctrine using the *Think* questions.



- **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 31. **Ask:** Do you know what makes a sin a mortal sin? Read aloud the paragraph about mortal sin. Take time with the three requirements: serious matter, recognition that the matter is serious disobedience of God's will, and free choice. Provide some clear examples, such as murder or theft. Then have your child read the second paragraph silently. Give an example of a venial sin, such as stealing a pencil from someone's desk.

If your parish has planned a time for the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent, use this section in the handbook as a way to prepare together for receiving the Sacrament. We confess venial sins because we want God's help in overcoming these destructive tendencies in our lives.

*Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Venture, page 5.*

- **Catholic Faith Word • Sin (page 5)** Read aloud the definition to introduce the *Our Catholic Faith* feature. **Ask:** How could the actions of T.J. and Tom be regarded as sins? *Open-ended. T.J. did not take good care of Tom's bike. Tom withheld his forgiveness from T.J.*
- **Our Catholic Faith • Sin Separates Us From God (page 5)** Have your child read this page silently and complete the activity in the "tablets." If a reminder is needed about Commandments 7–10, turn to pages 33–35 in the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook.

## Live the Gospel

- **Living the Gospel • Make a Straight Road (pages 6-7)** Read aloud the introductory text on the top of the page, which helps connect this activity and the Sunday Gospel. Choose one of the dilemmas to read or act out together. Then work with your child to identify the problem. List all possible solutions—good and bad. Then decide together which solution will be best and why.
- **Saints • Saint Juan Diego (page 8)** The Church celebrates Saint Juan Diego, patron of indigenous peoples, on December 9. Give your child time to read the comic. Remind your child that Juan Diego showed great faith, even when it might have been easy to doubt or even ignore the miracles happening in front of him.
- **Closing Prayer** Turn to page 56 in the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook and pray the Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi together. Share that being a peacemaker—one of the calls of this prayer—is to be a person who seeks reconciliation in all situations.



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## Sunday Gospel Background

The religious leaders in this Sunday's Gospel are very straightforward with John the Baptist. They ask him directly if he is the Messiah or one of the prophets. To each question, John the Baptist answers no. But he declares himself to be "a voice of one crying out in the desert," and says, "Make straight the way of the Lord." John here quotes the words of prophet Isaiah that we also heard in last Sunday's Gospel. John tells the people that someone greater than he is coming, whose sandal strap he is not fit to untie. As Catholics, we have an obligation to make Jesus known by our words and actions, and to recognize Jesus, especially in the Eucharist and in one another.

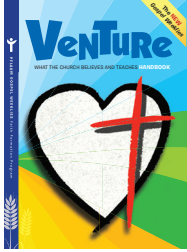
## Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- ☐ **Pray together** (Today's prayer is based on this Sunday's Second Reading. Light the rose/pink candle on your Advent wreath, or any candle you have. Explain that this candle reminds us of the joy we will have when Christmas comes. We light this candle on the Third Sunday of Advent because we are so close to the birth of Jesus.) "Brothers and sisters, rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks. May the God of peace make you perfectly holy and ready for the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen."
- ☐ **Cover Activity • What is the best present you ever received? (page 1)** Tell your child you're going to guess what they want for Christmas. Together, read what other *Venture* readers describe as the best present they ever received. Give your child time to draw or write their best present.
- ☐ **Play • Why the Bells Rang, a Christmas Play (pages 2-3)** This drama captures a simple spirit of giving and invites us to recognize who and what make truly great gifts. Divide the parts between you and your child. Invite other family members to take part, if available. (Optional: contact your parish director of faith formation to see if he or she can schedule an online meeting with other families in your program to share multi-part readings such as this one.)
- ☐ **Discuss the Think questions on page 3.** *Answers: 1. The bells ring when a gift, given in the spirit of the Christ Child, is placed on the altar on Christmas Eve. 2-3. Open-ended. Note:* Help your child recognize that Pio's little coin was a real gift, because in order to give it, Pio had to give up his own happiness for the sake of another.

## Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • Who Is John the Baptist? (page 4)** Explain that Levites were from the Tribe of Levi. Levites sang the Psalms during Temple services, maintained the Temple, and served as guards, teachers, and judges. Divide up the parts of Narrator; Priest 1, 2, and 3; John the Baptist; Levite 1 and 2; and Pharisee to proclaim the Gospel together.
- ☐ **Discuss the Think questions on page 4.** *Answers: 1. The Messiah, or Elijah, whom tradition expected to return before the Messiah, or the Prophet, a teacher, lawgiver like Moses. 2. Someone getting people ready for God. 3. By what he does and by the prophecies his actions fulfill; open-ended.*
- ☐ **Connecting Gospel and Doctrine • Jesus Is an Unexpected Messiah (page 4)** Read aloud this summary of Sunday's Gospel. Then discuss the accompanying *Think* questions. *Answers: 1. Open-ended. You might have your child write this list on paper. 2. Though he is fully divine, Jesus came to be with us on Earth as a vulnerable, human being. He is Emmanuel, which means "God-with-us."*



- **Open the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 10.**

Have your child read the page silently. This is not new material, but your child might find it useful to have the Advent lessons summarized in one place.

*Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Venture page 5.*

- **Catholic Faith Word • Magnificat (page 5)** Read the definition aloud.
- **Our Catholic Faith • Isaiah and Mary Describe the Messiah (page 5)** This feature explores Sunday's First and Second Readings to show how Isaiah and Mary describe the Servant of God who is coming. Take turns reading aloud each paragraph. Read the verses from Isaiah and Mary together. Note the similarities between these two readings. Then invite your child to look at the five questions and think of people who are continuing Jesus' work in these areas. Talk about what your child admires about people who are doing this work.

## Live the Gospel

- **Puzzle • 'Tis the Season Word Search (page 6)** Have your child fill in the blanks and complete the word search. *Answers: 1. prepare; 2. ready; 3. wreath; 4. tree, lights, ornaments; 5. pray; 6. carols; 7. Jesus, Mary, Joseph; 8. St. Nick; 9. star, manger; 10. gold; 11. family; 12. holly.*



- **Living the Gospel • O Antiphons Ask Jesus to Come (pages 7-8)** The O Antiphons are prayers that lead up to the feast of Christmas. Read the first two paragraphs. You will need scissors, a hole punch, and yarn or string cut into 8 different lengths for this activity. You might play Christmas carols while your child completes it. (Before your child begins cutting, make sure to read aloud the quote from Saint John Paul II on page 8.)

Show your child how to cut out the panel of circles from the page by making a vertical cut on page 7. The cut line is marked with a scissors. Together, look at the antiphons for December 17, 18, and 19. Share what we learn about who Jesus is from the prayer and from the symbol on the back. The triangle (December 17) represents the Trinity and God's wisdom in creating the world; the tablets and fire (December 18)—God's covenant with Moses; and the tree (December 19)—the Messiah or new sprout that grew from the root or stump of Jesse, David's father. The other symbols are more self-explanatory.

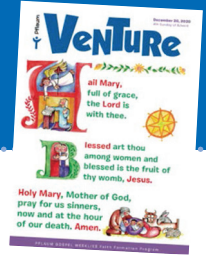
Use a hole punch to create a small hole at the top of each ornament and have your child pull the string through. Then follow the instructions on page 7 to create the mobile.

- **Closing Prayer • Advent Prayer (page 8)** Divide the reading parts between you and your child for the prayer service.



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### Sunday Gospel Background

The story of the Annunciation holds some wonderful lessons for us. First, we should not be afraid of saying yes to God. Mary was disturbed at the angel's words, but she listened and believed what Gabriel told her. Her yes, like ours, becomes an act of faith in God. Mary's yes gave God real flesh, and our yes makes Jesus present as well. It is through our prayer, the Church's teachings, and the voice of others that we can learn what God's will is for our lives. We must be the servants of the Lord, never afraid to follow his way because with him, everything is possible.

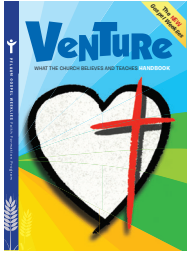
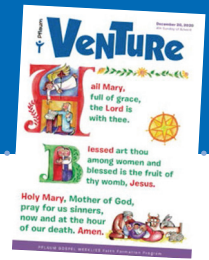
### Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- ☐ **Pray together/Cover Activity • The Hail Mary/Mary Says Yes to God (page 1)** (The angel's words to Mary in this Sunday's Gospel are where we get the first part of the Hail Mary. Have your child look at the images on the cover and then read the prayer aloud together.)
- ☐ **Story • Ways to Make Christmas Come Fast (pages 2-3)** This story helps children discover ways to help others prepare for Christmas and share the Good News of Jesus' birth. Read the story with your child. Use the bold colored type as a cue to switch readers.
- ☐ **Discuss the Think questions on page 3.** *Answers: 1. The elf distracts Jerome from his Christmas countdown. The activities keep him focused on service and kind acts. 2. Again, the elf distracts Jerome and keeps him busy. 3. Tina doesn't just obey her mother, she embraces the challenge to be more patient with Jerome. She gives him ways to prepare for Christmas.*

### Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • God Asks Mary to Be the Mother of Jesus (page 4)** Divide up the parts of Narrator, Angel Gabriel, and Mary between you and your child to proclaim the Gospel.
- ☐ **Discuss the Think questions on page 4.** *Answers: 1. Angels are messengers from God. Mary wonders why God has picked her and called her blessed. 2. The Old Testament, which are the Scriptures Mary knew, refer to the king of Israel as God's son. Mary didn't know how she could be a king's mother or even how she could bear a child, since she was a virgin with no husband. 3. Mary says she is God's servant and will do what God asks. 4-5. Open-ended.*
- ☐ **Connecting Gospel and Doctrine • Mary Says Yes to God (page 4)** Read aloud this feature to emphasize Mary's great faith. She says yes even when she doesn't understand how the angel's message could possibly happen as he says. This is an example of great faith.
- ☐ **Turn to the Think questions on page 4.** *Answers: 1. Open-ended. Suggest family, teachers, coaches. 2. Open-ended. 3. Prayer, study of the Bible, hearing examples of others' faith; open-ended.*



- **Open the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 17 and look at the Feasts of Mary.** Have your child create a 2021 calendar of Mary feasts by dividing a sheet of drawing paper into 12 spaces and labeling each space with the name of a month. As you read the page together, your child can add the feast of Mary to each month. Talk about any feasts of Mary particular to your own parish or surrounding parishes. For instance, you might have a special celebration of Our Lady of Czestochowa on August 26 or Our Lady of Mount Carmel on July 16.

*Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Venture, page 4.*

- **Catholic Faith Word • Annunciation (page 4)** Point out that Annunciation looks like “announcement” — and that’s exactly what it is.
- **Our Catholic Faith • God Promises to Be with David’s House (page 5)** When the angel tells Mary about her child, the angel refers to him as a member of the house of David. Explain that David was a king who founded Jerusalem. He united the twelve tribes of Israel into a nation just as George Washington united the thirteen colonies into the United States. Read aloud Sunday’s First Reading, “God Chooses David.” Then have your child read this feature silently and answer the question. *David was Jesus’ ancestor. Because Jesus conquered death by his Resurrection, his kingdom will last forever, as the angel says to Mary.*

## Live the Gospel

- **Living the Gospel • Mary and Gabriel Have an Important Meeting (pages 6-7)** Look at the painting together and read the bold text at the bottom of page 6. **Ask:** Is this picture like the one you have in your mind after hearing this Sunday’s Gospel? Take turns reading the introductory text aloud. Now take a “tour” of The Annunciation, starting with the light-blue shape at the bottom of page 7. Give your child time to think about these details.
  - Move to the rose-colored shape at the top of page 7. *The garden behind the fence represents the Garden of Eden.*
  - In the green shape, have your child speculate about why Fra Angelico painted Gabriel’s wings as he did.
  - The position of Mary’s and Gabriel’s arms shows that they humbly accept God’s message.
  - Again, Mary’s downward gaze shows acceptance of what Gabriel has told her. **Ask:** How would you feel in her place?
  - Close the discussion by asking why this scene might be shown outdoors. *The painting reflects the space in which the artist lived.*
- **Catholic Leaders • They Say Yes to God (page 8)** Take time to look at the brief biographies. **Ask:** Do you imagine saying yes to God could include being a scientist or coach? Read each example aloud together. Emphasize that God wants us to use all of our talents. Point out the QR codes; note that they link to related videos. Feel free to watch the videos any time this week.
- **Closing Prayer** “Thank you, God, for all the people who say yes to you, including... (*List some people you know of and invite your child to do the same: teachers, priests, religious sisters, artists, athletes, and writers—everyone who uses their gifts joyfully.*) Loving God, help us say yes to those who need our care. Amen.”



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## Sunday Gospel Background

The feasts of Christmas and Epiphany are not really about the material gifts we receive. They are about God showing his love for us in the person of Jesus; manifesting (that is what the word Epiphany means) that love to the world. Christmas was when Jesus showed himself to the shepherds, and on Epiphany, to the Magi. The gifts they brought were symbols of the real gift—God’s love. As we celebrate these two holy days with family traditions, we can remember that Jesus, born as a baby in Bethlehem, is the way God manifests his love for us. We can strive to show God’s love in the way that we live. That is the best gift we can give anyone.

## Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- ☐ **Pray together** “Loving God, for the gift of your Son, we thank you. And for... *(share what you are grateful for during the Christmas season and invite your child to do the same.)* Amen.”
- ☐ **Christmas Gospel • Jesus Is Born! (page 1)** Before reading, note that the Gospel of Luke is the only one that tells the story of Bethlehem. Divide up the three Narrator parts and the Angels between you. Read the Gospel together.
- ☐ **Look at the Think questions on page 1.** *Answers: 1. Your child can probably trace your family tree back to grandparents or great-grandparents. 2. Open-ended. Talk about emotions of each person in the Gospel—Mary, Joseph, shepherds. Assure your child that if we’d been there, it would be normal and okay to have been afraid—or perhaps even doubted all that we might have seen and heard.*
- ☐ **Story • The Three Skaters, an Epiphany Story (pages 2-3)** Ask your child to speculate from the illustrations what the story might be about. The three skaters remind us of the three kings, or Magi, in the Epiphany story. Explain that many cultures celebrate Epiphany as the time of gift-giving. Christmas Day remains a holy day rather than a family celebration. Get comfortable and read the story aloud to your child. When you are finished, talk about your responses. This is the kind of miracle we like to believe in, when a loving act is rewarded.
- ☐ **Discuss the Think questions on page 3.** *Answers: 1. It is Epiphany, ten days after Christmas, and even though the three skaters are unable to have much for their families, they help the couple and baby in the barn. They have the Christmas spirit. 2. Open-ended. Whenever you do a generous act, the remembrance of it lasts a long time in your own heart and sometimes in the heart of the person you helped. The sense of having done the right thing is its own reward.*

## Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Epiphany Gospel • Wise Men Visit Jesus (page 4)** The Gospel of Matthew is the only one that tells of the people he calls Magi, wise men who study the stars as omens. Because they brought expensive gifts to Jesus, people began to think of the wise men as wealthy kings. Because there are three gifts, they were imagined as three kings. It doesn’t matter what we call them. Their story is in Matthew’s Gospel to show that Jesus came for all people, not just for the Jews of his home country. Proclaim the Gospel by dividing up the parts and reading them aloud.
- ☐ **Discuss the two Think questions on page 4.** *Answers: 1. They followed the orders of King Herod to find the newborn king. They learned that the child was indeed the one for whom everyone had been waiting. They also learned in a dream that they should not*

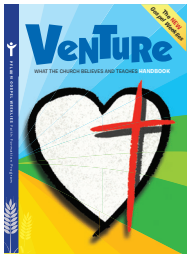


return to Herod, but rather go home by another route. 2. Herod was concerned that this child was indeed the Messiah and that he would eventually diminish his powers. 3. The three kings, or Magi, visited a poor family, too, and left behind gifts.

☐ **Connecting Gospel and Doctrine • Christmas Is Good News for the World (page 4)**

Read the doctrine aloud, then give your child time to ponder the accompanying *Think* questions. You might want to revisit these questions throughout the season.

Read aloud the quote from Saint John Paul II about the Blessed Sacrament. If your church is open and it is safe to do so, make plans to spend some time in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament during the coming weeks.



- ☐ **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 58. Have your child circle any unfamiliar words on pages 58–59. (Your child needn't worry about unfamiliar words; this is more of a mid-year review to see where you are and what is coming up.)

*Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Venture page 5.*

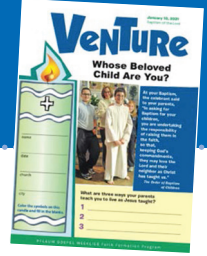
## Live the Gospel

- ☐ **Activity • Make a Christmas Scene (pages 5–8)** Read aloud the directions on page 5. Eliminate the star contest, but ask your child to draw a beautiful star to complete the activity.
- ☐ **Closing Prayer** Turn to page 53 in *What the Church Believes and Teaches*, and pray the Apostles' Creed together. Before you begin, invite your child to listen for the parts of this creed that recount the Incarnation and Nativity of Jesus. Then sing a Christmas carol of your child's choosing.



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### Sunday Gospel Background

This Sunday, we celebrate another sort of epiphany or manifestation. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' identity as Messiah and Son of God is revealed or given voice in this world. The story of Jesus' baptism in Sunday's Gospel begins Mark's Gospel and Jesus' public ministry. The story tells us that Jesus is God's Son. Being called by God as his beloved sons and daughters is what Baptism is about. Strengthened by Holy Communion and ultimately by Confirmation, we are fully brought into the Church and prepared to live as sons and daughters of the Father, brothers and sisters of Jesus and of one another.

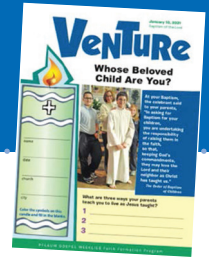
### Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- ☐ **Pray together** Lead your child in making the Sign of the Cross slowly and intentionally. Explain that this prayer shows our Christian belief in the Holy Trinity—God the Father, Jesus his Son, and the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, the Sign of the Cross reminds us of our belief in Jesus as God incarnate and in the Holy Spirit as God guiding us and our Church today. It is an act of faith.
- ☐ **Cover Activity • Whose Beloved Child Are You? (page 1)** Read aloud the headline, and ask if the word beloved sounds familiar. These words were spoken by God the Father to Jesus at his baptism: "This is my beloved Son." *Beloved* describes us as well. In Baptism, we become beloved children of God and members of Jesus' family.  
Help with the candle activity, which is about when and where your child was baptized. For the three ways you help your child live like Jesus, you might have your child read this silently and answer in their own words.
- ☐ **Article • Branson Becomes a Christian (pages 2-3)** Read the story together, taking turns at the bold text transitions. Most Catholics are baptized as infants and by pouring (affusion) of water. Ask if your child would like to be baptized as Branson was. Why or why not? What is good about being baptized when you are older?
- ☐ **Discuss the Think questions on page 3.** *Answers: 1. Branson was part of an RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) group in his parish. He studied with children his own age; he went to the cathedral to sign the Book of Election with adults. 2. Water cleanses us. Water also washes things away, as in a flood. Going into the water and rising out of it is a sign of moving from death to life; in this case, water symbolizes moving from death and sin to rising and new life in Jesus. 3. Branson said that receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus made him feel like he was part of the church community. Open-ended. 4. The Easter Vigil celebrates Jesus' rising from the dead. It is a good time to be baptized into Jesus' family.*

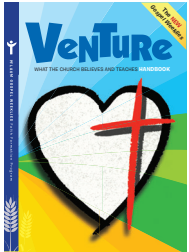
### Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • Jesus Brings Heaven to Earth (page 4)** Proclaim the Gospel by dividing and reading the parts: John, Narrator 1 and 2, and the Voice.
- ☐ **Discuss the Think questions on page 4.** *Answers: 1. The heavens splitting show that God is let loose in our world through Jesus. 2. The voice is God. God acknowledges Jesus as his Son; God is pleased with Jesus as he begins to fulfill his mission on earth. 3. Like Jesus, Branson's Baptism is witnessed by the community of believers. Open-ended.*
- ☐ **Catholic Faith Word • Baptism (page 4)** Ask your child to read aloud this week's definition.



## □ Connecting Gospel and Doctrine • We Join Jesus' Family at Baptism

**(page 4)** Read aloud this summary of Sunday's Gospel concepts. We join two families at our Baptism—the Church on earth, and Jesus' holy family in Heaven. Then discuss the *Think* questions. **Answers: 1–2.** *Open-ended; the idea is to think about the importance of the promises we make and those our parents and godparents made on our behalf at our Baptism.*



## □ Open the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to pages 19–20.

Invite your child to read both pages silently. Explain that you will have a quiz show-type game afterwards. Plan to have some kind of small reward (like a snack or small treat) for questions answered correctly. Ask the following based on the reading:

- Who can administer Baptism?
- What kinds of sins are forgiven at Baptism?
- Can you be baptized more than once?
- What is the indelible spiritual mark on your soul?
- Can someone who is not baptized go to Heaven after they die?

*Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Venture, page 5.*

## □ Our Catholic Faith • Jesus Is the Servant of God **(page 5)** Have your child read the text on page 5 silently and then answer the questions on the right. **Answers: 1.** *Above all, Jesus will bring justice; he will be a humble peacemaker; he will care for those who are hurt or imprisoned. 2.* *God expresses that he is well-pleased with his servant, Jesus.*

## Live the Gospel

- **Living the Gospel • Baptism Is About Belonging to God (pages 6–7)** The introductory part of this activity is meant to help kids realize what it means to belong to a group, like a swim team. Read aloud the opening paragraph, and ask your child to complete the team's characteristics. Do the same with God's Group in the middle column. Save the right column and the prayer service on page 7 to conclude the lesson.
- **GodTalk • Questions About God, Faith, and the Church (page 8)** Read this feature aloud together. The questions represent a cross section of questions asked by children, but adults are often curious about these as well.
- **Closing Prayer (pages 6–7)** Fill a bowl of water and place it on a table. Return to the right column on page 6—Celebrate the Sacrament of Baptism. Read aloud these introductory paragraphs. Explain that page 7 is a prayer service modeled on the *Order of Baptism of Children*. (Since you most likely are not gathering at church, you can skip the part about knocking on the church door.) Take the part of Leader yourself, and encourage your child to respond loudly and clearly to each question. Pray the Lord's Prayer to conclude your lesson.



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